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Will the Real CIA Please Sit Down?

In all the reporting and editorializing about intelligence agencies, if there has been any genuine effort to inform the people how they work and the consequences of this kind of work, I have yet to see it.

The Post's (12/29/75) editorial mistitled "Richard S. Welch" is an unthinking hurt to rather than defense of the CIA. It endangers the lives of CIA agents as the most recent publication of Welch's name could not and did not threaten him or cause his murder.

Nor did Congressional exposures, long the CIA line in its efforts to frustrate the long-overdue cleansing.

It is incredible and permeating CIA arrogance and stupidity, the normal end product of limitless power and its abuse, that killed Welch.

Sending him back to Greece alone "set him up," your editorial's misdirected words.

From news accounts Welch had a previously exposed career of serving the CIA in countries whose governments it overthrew. His presence coincided with the CIA's establishment of unelected governments, in most cases, military dictatorships. Published accounts place him with transparent cover in Guatemala, Peru, Guyana, Greece, and, in time of turmoil, in Cyprus.

This is to say that he also was a murderer, whether or not it is considered by the Post or others to be patriotic to thwart the will of other peoples. There were countless murders. Friends, relatives and survivors of torture gave the CIA's Welches numberless thousands of vengeance seekers.

Most insane of all was sending him to Greece again, and so soon after the end of the CIA-supported dictatorship. Those who survived its tortures and those who loved its dead victims were free, with ample cause for retaliation. Returning the already exposed Welch to Athens was not enough stupidity. He was housed in the long-time and publicly known residence of his CIA predecessors.

You deceive the American people in pretending that the identities of CIA agents are all that secret. They are secret from the American people only. Especially a man with Welch's career. It could be and surely was followed by every intelligence agency in the world and most of the guerrilla groups. Of the handy guides our government publishes, the diplomatic list is the most convenient means for agents under a diplomatic cover, Welch's.

There has to come a time when the CIA and all other spy outfits call their agents in from the cold. Long after that time had been reached for Welch, the CIA sent him to Greece where he had no cover at all, with the most recent disaster of the CIA's own military dictatorship, the Cyprus plotting, still the cause of passionate hatreds to provide still new enticements to his murder.

Whether or not Welch was actually or morally responsible for any murders, wherever he would be sent at this stage of his non-secret career he would inevitably be associated with murders of the past or considered an indication of new CIA support of repression or the coming overthrowing of the government.

In any intelligence organization a Richard S. Welch had survived longer in these kinds of assignments with their violent consequences than he or any intelligence agency could expect. He should have been assigned to a proper analytical function at headquarters where all that experience, whether or not in our national interest, could have been used. That kind of experience cannot be taught in colleges or by the CIA.

There is more sense in the argument thatthe CIA sent him to be murdered to restrain exposures of its own misdeeds than to your argument that this most recent printing of his name caused him death. I am not a partisan of the "Fifth Estate." I long have had disagreements with its past and present personnel. But it is indecent to deceive the people and to abuse them by pretending that they, somehow, made public a nonsecret and thus attracted Welch's murder.

Besides, the East Germans beat them by eight years in accurately identifying Welch - in print.

There simply was nothing secret about Welch's connections or past. Except from Americans.

Check your charges against the long list of those who have been identified as CIA agents or its local spies and torturers in so many countries. How many reprisals?

And why not remember also all those tortures paid for by the Welches of the CIA? Can you estimate the number of victims in Southeast Asia or Latin America or Greece?

I believe we need an efficient intelligence agency in today's world. Unlike you, I have spent years inquiring into how the CIA and the FBI work. Freedom cannot survive their records. They must be kept within the democratic framework. They have not been. They are today pulling the same kind of stuff you proclaim is being cleaned up. It is as former CIA Director Allen Dulles said in an executive session of the Warren Commission it took me a decade to break loose from suppression: To these people lying, including perjury, is the highest dedication to patriotism. As Dulles also said, they lie to and about each other and frame each other - within the agency itself. (If you want fresh proofs, as of this year, I have them and expect them to be used in court in the near future.)

An appropriate subject for editorial comment is how for all practical purposes the illegal, improper and antidemocratic domestic CIA activity remains largely unexposed, despite all the investigations. It and the administration have had the Church committee, for example, spinning its wheels. What had to come out is all that has come out. One of the supposed investigators, David Belin, the man who ran the Rockefeller Commission, told me in the presence of two dozen witnesses that he did not have to "investigate" the CIA; they just delivered everything to him! (It was at a dinner at Vanderbilt University,

Nashville, Tennessee, on November 19, 1975. This preceded our debate, which was followed in three days by his call for a new investigation of the JFK assassination.)

As is any murder, that of Richard S. Welch, regardless of his past, is a tragedy. But in the context of national needs, your editorial perpetuates the wrongs of the past. It deters overdue reform. That it deceives our own people only is a greater tragedy. This means Welch died in vain, that nothing will be learned from it.